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Senate of Pennsylvania Session of 2023 - 2024 Regular Session

MEMORANDUM

Posted: December 6, 2022 09:24 AM

From: [Senator Vincent J. Hughes](#)

To: All Senate members

Subject: Automatic Voter Registration

In the near future, I will be reintroducing my automatic voter registration legislation, Senate Bill 141 from last session. More than 50 years ago, a strong and dedicated group of civil rights activists and ordinary citizens marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, fighting to extend the right to vote to all Americans. The indelible images associated with Selma, including the infamous "Bloody Sunday" attack on the marchers on the Edmund Pettis Bridge, are a constant reminder that the fight for basic civil rights for all is never-ending and not without a price.

We have made much progress as a nation since Selma, but the dream of universal voting access is something that is still yet to be obtained. To honor those who marched in Selma and died in pursuit of voting rights for all, I will continue to introduce this legislation until we have an automatic voter registration process in this Commonwealth.

My legislation, based on a similar law in Oregon, would essentially change our voter registration system from an "opt-in" system to an "opt-out" system. Under current law, citizens can elect to register to vote ("opt-in") either electronically or by filling out a voter registration form when they apply for a public benefit, service or license through the Department of Transportation or other state agencies currently authorized to assist with registering voters.

Under my proposal, these agencies would automatically collect an individual's relevant voting-related information with the application and send it electronically to the Department of State and to the counties for purposes of registering the voter. Prior to completing the registration, a voter would receive a notice allowing them to select a political party affiliation or to decline registration ("opt out"). If the individual does not "opt out" within 21 days, they will be added to the voter rolls.

When I first began introducing this bill only a handful of states had enacted automatic voter registration laws. Now twenty states, including our neighbors Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia have authorized automatic voter registration. The promise of democracy can only be realized when every eligible citizen exercises their right to vote. Automatic voter registration can remove barriers to registration for eligible voters, lead to cleaner voter registration rolls, reduce the need for provisional ballots and increase voter turn-out. Ensuring citizens are enfranchised in the democratic process should be a bipartisan initiative.

I ask that you join me in honoring the memory of those who marched in Selma by co-sponsoring this legislation. Please contact Michael Deery or Veronica Miller in my office if you have any questions.

 Introduced as [SB40](#)

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